



National Alliance on Mental Illness

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
DMHAS Budget
February 18, 2010

Ralph Oriola - President
860-882-0236
www.namict.org

SAVE MENTAL HEALTH

Good evening, distinguished Chairs and members of the Appropriations Committee. I come before you today to address the issues associated with the proposed budget shortfalls proposed by Governor Rell. In the past I have partitioned several legislative committees as a parent of a child with severe mental illness. Today I not only represent my daughter who was diagnosed 14 years ago with schizo – effective disorder, but the thousands of NAMI families across Connecticut who continue to HOPE for the reward of RECOVERY associated with mental health.

We all remember the mistakes of the past when Connecticut closed 2 state hospitals. This action resulted in a Keep the Promise Coalition, which includes NAMI-CT among over 40 member organizations across the state concerned with mental health services. The 15 million dollars in projected savings with the closure of Cedar Ridge Hospital in Newington must be allocated for housing vouchers for supportive housing, and rebuilding our community based system of care. We can't lose sight of the good rewards coming from our local community based mental health agencies.

My daughter has been on several housing waiting lists for over 3 years. She has been told the same story over and over; "nothing available, we have no money for supportive housing- we will keep you on our list".

DHMAS and others have promoted Recovery for many years. This won't happen with continued budget cuts that affect our families well being. NAMI's education and advocacy programs give families hope for the future. Please don't deny that hope by forcing those suffering from mental health to emergency room care, nursing homes, incarceration or even suicide.

Our nation's future depends on the health and well-being of its children. Today, one in 10 children struggles with mental illness. Only about one - half of youth living with mental illness receives treatment. We must be committed to strengthen our community mental health services for children, teens and young adults. Without the necessary medication and treatment the consequences are costly. Young people drop out of school, become entangled with the juvenile justice system, and are left behind in developing the skills and experiences necessary to lead productive adult lives.

Our hope rests in your hands. Please make the right decisions when considering ALL our citizens across Connecticut coping with the daily tribulations associated with Mental Health.

Thank you for your time
Respectfully,
Ralph Oriola